

LAOS AID CHIEF IN LAOS GOT \$25,000 GIFTS

**I. C. A. Ex-Official Tells
House Unit of Gratuities
From U. S. Contractor**

WASHINGTON, March 23

(AP) — A former foreign aid official told Congress under oath today that he had accepted cash, stocks and airline tickets worth a total of about \$25,000 from a contractor for United States public works projects in Laos.

Edward T. McNamara of Tampa, Fla., made the disclosure under questioning by Representative Porter Hardy Jr., Democrat of Virginia, chairman of a House Government Operations subcommittee. The testimony will be turned over to the Department of Justice, Mr. Hardy said.

McNamara, public works officer of the International Cooperation Administration mission in Laos from October, 1955, to the end of 1957, said he received the gifts from the American-owned Universal Construction Company.

Company Operations

The Company had contracts for highways and other construction in Laos. The witness named Willis A. Bird, a former United States Army major, and Gerald A. Peabody as partners in the company, which operates also in Japan and Okinawa.

McNamara said that he recommended an I.C.A.-financed highway contract worth \$1,068,500 between Universal and the Laos government. He also approved the transfer of \$1,500,000 worth of highway machinery to the Laos Ministry of Public Works, he testified.

He acknowledged that a \$10,000 check signed by Bird and submitted as evidence had paid for 646 shares of stock in the Canada General Fund, Ltd., on June 1, 1957.

Got Loan, He Testifies

He also acknowledged borrowing without repayment \$10,000 worth of Laos currency from Peabody.

He said that the two had on two occasions bought airline tickets for his wife for vacation trips to Hong Kong.

Winnings in poker games at a Laos night club had enabled him to buy a \$300 diamond ring, he testified.

He had sold his automobile to an employe of Universal for \$4,480, he testified, but, after receiving half payment in cash, he had been allowed to keep the automobile.

He said that it was his responsibility to sign certificates of work performance done

Universal under contract for the United States Government. No formal effort was made to see that the work was actually done, he testified.

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